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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 005893

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SUBJECT: SULTAN BIN ZAYID: "MUST THE U.S. BE TOUGHER
THAN THE ISRAELIS ON PALESTINE?"

11. (U) CLASSIFIED BY THEODORE H. KATTOUF, AMBASSADOR,
REASON 1.5 (B) AND (D).

12. (C) SUMMARY: A FRIENDLY BUT CLEARLY FRUSTRATED SULTAN BIN ZAYID, UAE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND SECOND SON OF PRESIDENT ZAYID BIN SULTAN, CONVEYED TO AMBASSADOR IN FRANK, DELIBERATE TERMS OCTOBER 29 HIS OWN "AND MANY OTHERS'" DEEP DISAPPOINTMENT THAT THE U.S., IN ITS "UNCRITICAL SUPPORT" FOR ISRAEL AND HARSH CRITICISMS OF THE PALESTINIANS, HAD BETRAYED ITS HISTORICAL REPUTATION AS A CHAMPION OF FAIRNESS, JUSTICE AND THE INDEPENDENCE OF OPPRESSED PEOPLES. THE ARABS, HE SAID, NO LONGER HAD ANY EXPECTATIONS THAT THE U.S. WOULD SERVE AS AN HONEST BROKER FOR PEACE, AND THIS COULD HAVE RAMIFICATIONS FOR LARGER U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS, "WHICH WAS NOT GOOD FOR EITHER OF US." OFFERING HIS CONDOLENCES FOR THE LOSS OF LIFE RESULTING FROM THE "COWARDLY" ATTACK ON THE USS COLE, SULTAN WARNED THAT EXTREMISTS WOULD CONTINUE TO EXPLOIT TENSIONS IN THE REGION TO FURTHER THEIR OWN AGENDAS. IN A RARE COMMENTARY ON LEBANON, SULTAN LABELED SYRIAN POLICY THERE "DISASTROUS," AND SAID THE UAE WOULD BE THE FIRST TO APPLAUD THE WITHDRAWAL OF SYRIAN TROOPS FROM LEBANESE SOIL. SULTAN'S UNVARNISHED VIEWS NO DOUBT REFLECT HIS FATHER'S THINKING, ALTHOUGH SULTAN SAID HE HAD AVOIDED RAISING THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES IN RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH HIS RECUPERATING FATHER SO AS NOT TO UPSET ZAYID. THE MEETING WAS GIVEN EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE THAT EVENING AND IN THE FOLLOWING DAY'S PRESS, UNDER THE HEADLINE "THE UAE URGES WASHINGTON TO BE HONEST AND DO WHAT IS RIGHT." END SUMMARY.

MORE ZIONIST THAN THE ISRAELIS?

13. (C) MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR, WHO WAS ACCOMPANIED BY THE DCM, ON OCTOBER 29 AT HIS SEASIDE PALACE, UAE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER SULTAN BIN ZAYID -- RENOWNED FOR HIS FRANKNESS -- WASTED LITTLE TIME WITH CONVENTIONAL FORMALITIES BEFORE LAUNCHING INTO A CRITIQUE OF THE U.S. RESPONSE TO RECENT VIOLENCE IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. SPEAKING QUIETLY (NOTE: IN TYPICAL BEDOUIN FASHION WHEN EXPRESSING DISAPPOINTMENT TO A FRIEND. END NOTE.) AND IN ARABIC, SULTAN ASKED WHY IT WAS THAT THE U.S. APPEARED TO BE TAKING A TOUGHER POLITICAL STANCE AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS IN THE CURRENT SITUATION THAN EVEN ISRAEL? STRESSING THAT THIS WAS NOT JUST HIS OPINION, BUT WHAT HE WAS HEARING IN THE MAJLISES AS WELL, SULTAN SAID THERE WAS GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT THROUGHOUT THE ARAB WORLD IN THE U.S. FAILURE TO ACT AS AN HONEST BROKER. MOREOVER, THE ARABS WERE BLAMING THE U.S. MORE THAN ISRAEL FOR THE CRISIS BECAUSE IT WAS IN A POSITION TO DO SOMETHING AND DID NOT. "THE ISRAELIS ARE FIRING U.S. WEAPONS -- APACHE HELICOPTER GUNSHIPS AND M16 RIFLES -- AGAINST UNARMED PALESTINIAN CHILDREN," SULTAN SAID; "THE WORLD HAD WITNESSED SCENES OF BEASTLY BEHAVIOR ON THE PART OF THE ISRAELIS, AND YET THE U.S. CRITICIZES THE ARABS." THE ARABS HAD EXPECTED MUCH MORE OF THE U.S., GIVEN ITS HISTORY OF STANDING UP FOR JUSTICE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIR TREATMENT, AND ITS OWN SUCCESSFUL FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE AGAINST AN OPPRESSOR NATION. THE PALESTINIANS HAD BEEN LIVING UNDER ONE FORM OF OCCUPATION OR ANOTHER FOR YEARS. THEY WERE LOSING ALL HOPE. ALL THEY WERE SEEKING WAS THEIR INDEPENDENCE. THE ARABS

WOULD ACCEPT THE ISRAELIS AND THEIR NEED FOR SECURITY IF THEY, IN TURN, WOULD ACCEPT BOUNDARIES AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF OTHERS. THEY COULD NOT RELY FOREVER ON THEIR NUCLEAR ARSENALS TO PROTECT THEM; THEY WOULD HAVE TO MAKE PEACE WITH THEIR ARAB NEIGHBORS. BUT, SULTAN CONTINUED, EVEN THE WHITE HOUSE COULD NOT OFFER A BALANCED ASSESSMENT OF THE CONFLICT, AND SO THE ARABS NO LONGER HAD EXPECTATIONS OF AMERICAN FAIRNESS.

14. (C) WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRAGIC ASPECTS OF THE CURRENT CRISIS AND OFFERING HIS SYMPATHIES TO THE INNOCENT VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE, THE AMBASSADOR URGED SULTAN TO TAKE THE LONGER VIEW. ALL PARTIES HAD EVOLVED IN THE PROCESS OF SEEKING PEACE, AND MUCH HAD BEEN ACCOMPLISHED OVER THE YEARS, IN PARTICULAR, FOLLOWING THE MADRID CONFERENCE. RABIN AND PERES RECOGNIZED THE GROWING THREAT IRAN AND IRAQ POSED AND DECIDED TO MAKE PEACE WITH THEIR NEIGHBORS AND DEAL WITH THE PLO. ALTHOUGH ONCE SHUNNED, ARAFAT HAD VISITED PRESIDENT CLINTON AT THE WHITE HOUSE ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS AND WAS TREATED AS A FULL PARTNER IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE. THE REASON THINGS HAD NOW FLARED UP SO BADLY WAS PRECISELY BECAUSE OF THE PROGRESS MADE AT CAMP DAVID II, PARTICULARLY THE REQUIREMENT TO DEAL WITH JERUSALEM AND ITS HOLY PLACES. THE EXTREMISTS WERE WORRIED. BUT IT WOULD BE WRONG TO FORGET OR THROW AWAY ALL THE PROGRESS MADE OVER THE PAST DECADE BECAUSE OF THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF THE PAST MONTH. WHAT WAS NOW IMPORTANT WAS THAT THE VIOLENCE CEASE SO THAT PASSIONS COULD COOL. THE U.S. WOULD REMAIN ENGAGED IN THE SEARCH FOR PEACE NO MATTER WHO WON THE UPCOMING U.S. ELECTIONS, AS THIS WAS IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST.

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR LARGER U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS

15. (C) SULTAN AGREED THAT "THIS WILL PASS (I.E. THE CRISIS); IT IS LIFE," WHILE EXPRESSING HIS HOPE THAT IT DID NOT GET WORSE. OTHERWISE, HE SAID, THERE WOULD BE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT FOR MODERATE ARAB LEADERS TO DEFEND CONTINUED CLOSE TIES TO THE U.S. OR TO DEFLECT ACCUSATIONS THAT THE U.S. IS MANIPULATING THEM UNLESS THE U.S. IS SEEN TO BE FAIR ON ISSUES IMPORTANT TO THE ARABS. OFFERING HIS CONDOLENCES FOR THE DEATH OF THE 17 SAILORS FOLLOWING THE "COWARDLY" ATTACK ON THE USS COLE, SULTAN SUGGESTED A LINKAGE BETWEEN SUCH ACTS OF TERRORISM AND THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT. IN THIS CONTEXT, SULTAN REMARKED THAT THE U.S. SEEMED TO FORGET THAT ISRAEL HAD "CREATED" HAMAS AND SUPPORTED HIZBOLLAH AS COUNTERWEIGHTS TO THE PLO. NOW THESE EXTREMIST GROUPS WERE OUT OF CONTROL, PRESENTING A THREAT TO ALL CONCERNED. YET WHEN THEY ATTACK, SULTAN SUGGESTED, THE REAL VICTIM IS U.S.-ARAB RELATIONS.

BUT ISRAEL NOT THE ONLY OCCUPYING POWER...

16. (C) EXPANDING ON HIS THEME OF ISRAELI ATTEMPTS TO DOMINATE AND POLARIZE -- RATHER THAN LIVE WITH -- HER NEIGHBORS (AND ALLUDING TO PERCEIVED ISRAELI EFFORTS TO CANTONIZE THE WEST BANK), SULTAN DESCRIBED ISRAELI EFFORTS TO "DIVIDE AND CONTROL" LEBANON THROUGH THE CREATION OF A SERIES OF SECTARIAN CANTONS. "THIS WAS BEN GURION'S AND SUBSEQUENTLY SHARON'S PLAN," HE SAID, "AND IT DIDN'T WORK." THE AMBASSADOR IMPLIED THAT SYRIA HAD CONTRIBUTED ITS SHARE TO LEBANON'S TRAVAILS, AIDED AND ABETTED BY CERTAIN LEBANESE POLITICIANS WHO CONTINUED TO LOOK TOWARD DAMASCUS FOR DECISIONS EVEN ON TRIVIAL MATTERS. SULTAN READILY AGREED THAT SYRIA'S POLICIES IN LEBANON WERE "DISASTROUS," AND EFFECTIVELY JUST ANOTHER FORM OF OCCUPATION. THERE WOULD BE BROAD ARAB SUPPORT FOR SYRIA'S WITHDRAWAL OF ITS MILITARY TROOPS FROM LEBANON AND "THE UAE WOULD HEAD THE LIST." "I KNOW THIS," SULTAN EMPHASIZED, "AND CAN SPEAK FOR MY COUNTRY'S POSITION."

COMMENT

17. (C) THE TELEVISION CAMERAS AND CREW THAT AWAITED THE AMBASSADOR'S ARRIVAL SIGNALLED SULTAN'S INTENTION TO USE THIS MEETING AS MUCH TO MOLLIFY AN ANGRY POPULACE AS TO PASS A MESSAGE TO THE U.S. INDEED, THE MEETING WAS GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE ON

THE EVENING NEWS AND IN THE FOLLOWING MORNING'S PRESS, WITH AN UNUSUAL AMOUNT OF DETAIL. OPTICS ASIDE, SULTAN'S MESSAGE WAS SINCERE AND REFLECTS WHAT WE ARE HEARING FROM A BROAD RANGE OF CONTACTS.

KATTOUF